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## **USS Saipan to Return from Final Deployment**

NORFOLK, Va. –The amphibious assault ship USS Saipan (LHA 2) will return to Naval Station Norfolk **Friday, Dec. 22**, after completing a four month deployment as Expeditionary Action Group 3 (EAG-3). This marks the final deployment for Saipan, which is scheduled for decommissioning in early spring.

Saipan, with nearly 1,000 Sailors, departed Naval Station Norfolk Aug. 15 with Norfolk-based Helicopter Combat Support Squadron Two-Six (HCS 26) for the Sixth and Fifth Fleet Areas of Operation in support of Maritime Security Operations (MSO).

During this deployment Saipan employed several non-traditional capabilities including Mine Countermeasure Operations and the Scan Eagle Unmanned Aerial Vehicle system.

Using the MH-53 Sea Dragons of Mine Countermeasures Squadron 15 out of Bahrain, Saipan conducted two demonstrations of mine sweeping capabilities in the Arabian Gulf during the months of September and November.

Saipan's use of the Scan Eagle Unmanned Aerial Vehicle included the performance of over 400 hours of surveillance and the completion of more than 50 Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance missions.

This surge deployment was designed to be flexible and provided presence and strike power to support joint and allied forces afloat and ashore.

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**NOTE: Media wishing to cover the return of USS Saipan should contact Second Fleet Public Affairs at (757) 443-9850 ext. (x47122) no later than 3 p.m. Thursday, December 21.**

Information on USS Saipan (LHA 2) is available by visiting <http://www.navy.mil/>. Use the ship type to find information on the ships.